

Amendments to the Claims:

This listing of claims will replace all prior versions, and listings, of claims in the application:

Listing of Claims:

Claims 1 to 19. (cancelled)

Claim 20. (currently amended) A method for treating an inorganic slurry to preserve the slurry against bacterial contamination, comprising the steps of:

(I) providing a slurry in a substantially homogeneous phase,
(II) adding to the slurry an effective amount of a composition comprising:

(a) a tetrakis(hydroxyorgano)phosphonium salt (herein THP⁺ salt) selected from the group consisting of
tetrakis (hydroxymethyl) phosphonium sulphate,
tetrakis (hydroxymethyl) phosphonium chloride,
tetrakis (hydroxymethyl) phosphonium phosphate,
tetrakis (hydroxymethyl) phosphonium nitrate and
tetrakis (hydroxymethyl) phosphonium oxalate; and

(b) a dispersant selected from the group consisting of:
(i) phosphonated compounds containing at least one tertiary nitrogen atom; and

(ii) homopolymers of unsaturated acids; and

(III) ~~maintaining the slurry in a substantially homogeneous phase thereby to preserve the slurry against bacterial contamination~~ preserving the slurry against bacterial contamination, whilst avoiding instantaneous heterogeneous thickening of the slurry due to the THP⁺ salt.

Claim 21. (previously presented) A method according to claim 20, in which the THP⁺ salt is tetrakis(hydroxymethyl)phosphonium sulphate.

Claim 22. (previously presented) A method according to claim 20, in which the THP⁺ salt is tetrakis(hydroxymethyl)phosphonium chloride, phosphate, nitrate or oxalate.

Claim 23. (previously presented) A method according to claim 20, in which the dispersant (b(i)) is a phosphonated compound

containing one tertiary nitrogen atom.

Claim 24. (previously presented) A method according to claim 23, in which the dispersant (b(i)) is a sodium salt of nitrilotris(methylene phosphonate).

Claim 25. (previously presented) A method according to claim 24, in which the salt is the tetra-sodium salt.

Claim 26. (previously presented) A method according to claim 20, in which the dispersant (b(ii)) is a homopolymer of acrylic acid.

Claim 27. (previously presented) A method according to claim 26, in which the homopolymer has a molecular weight in the range 2000 to 5000.

Claim 28. (previously presented) A method according to claim 20, in which the ratio of THP⁺ salt to dispersant in the composition is about 2:1 (as active ingredients).

Claim 29. (previously presented) A method according to claim 20, in which the composition is added to the slurry in an amount in the range 10 ppm to 1000 ppm (by weight of the slurry).

Claim 30. (previously presented) A method according to claim 20, in which the composition is added to the slurry in an amount of about 750 ppm (by weight of the slurry).

Claim 31. (previously presented) A method, according to claim 20, in which the slurry comprises a calcium carbonate-based slurry.

Claim 32. (previously presented) A method according to claim 20, in which the slurry comprises a pigment slurry, a clay slurry or a cement slurry.

Claims 33 to 34. (cancelled)

Claim 35. (currently amended) A method for treating an inorganic slurry to preserve the slurry against bacterial contamination, comprising the steps of:

(I) providing a slurry in a substantially homogeneous phase,
(II) adding to the slurry an effective amount of a composition comprising:

(a) a tetrakis (hydroxyorgano) phosphonium salt (herein THP⁺ salt) selected from the group consisting of
tetrakis (hydroxymethyl) phosphonium sulphate,
tetrakis (hydroxymethyl) phosphonium chloride,
tetrakis (hydroxymethyl) phosphonium phosphate,
tetrakis (hydroxymethyl) phosphonium nitrate and
tetrakis (hydroxymethyl) phosphonium oxalate; and

(b) a dispersant which is the tetra sodium salt of nitrilotris (methylene phosphonate); and

~~(III) maintaining the slurry in a substantially homogeneous phase thereby to preserve the slurry against bacterial contamination~~
preserving the slurry against bacterial contamination, whilst
avoiding instantaneous heterogeneous thickening of the slurry due
to the THP⁺ salt.

Claims 36 to 37. (cancelled)

Claim 38. (currently amended) A method for treating an inorganic slurry to preserve the slurry against bacterial contamination, comprising the steps of:

(I) providing a slurry in a substantially homogeneous phase,

(II) adding to the slurry an effective amount of a composition comprising:

(a) a tetrakis (hydroxyorgano) phosphonium salt (herein THP⁺ salt) selected from the group consisting of tetrakis (hydroxymethyl) phosphonium sulphate, tetrakis (hydroxymethyl) phosphonium chloride, tetrakis (hydroxymethyl) phosphonium phosphate, tetrakis (hydroxymethyl) phosphonium nitrate and tetrakis (hydroxymethyl) phosphonium oxalate; and

(b) a dispersant which is a homopolymer of acrylic acid, the homopolymer having a molecular weight in the range of 2,000 to 5,000, and

(III) ~~maintaining the slurry in a substantially homogeneous phase thereby to preserve~~ preserving the slurry against bacterial contamination , whilst avoiding instantaneous heterogeneous thickening of the slurry due to the THP⁺ salt.

Claim 39. (previously presented) The method of claim 20 wherein the slurry being provided contains 70-80% by weight of undissolved suspended solids.